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SUBJECT: WINNING MASS AUDIENCES - THE U.S. PRESENCE AT THE 2006
KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR

¶1. SUMMARY: On November 21, the Ambassador participated in the opening ceremony of Kuwait's 31st International Book Fair. Embassy Kuwait was the sole Western presence during the 10-day exhibition that attracted tens of thousands of Kuwaiti visitors. Public Affairs offered more than 120 RBO, IIP, and ECA titles, English-teaching materials, American titles in Arabic and English on U.S. history, culture, business, and government and provided information on study in the U.S. Hundreds of teachers, professionals, and students of all ages visited the U.S. booth until it closed on December 1, presenting the Post with an ideal public outreach opportunity. END SUMMARY

¶2. COMMENT: Embassy Public Affairs staff mounted an exhibit of American titles at the 31st Kuwait International Book Fair, November 21 through December 2. The Embassy's presence at the international book fair was significant for both cultural and political reasons. The conservative Islamic publishing houses had a far greater representation at the book fair than any other group. Over the past 10 years, Kuwait has been witness to a notable increase in conservatism and censorship, including the banning of American titles for the book fair in prior years. The U.S. presence at the annual Kuwait international book fair is desirable and necessary to offer Kuwaiti readers an alternative to the offering of mounds of conservative Islamic publications from regionally based publishing houses.

Presenting a Buffet of Educational Materials

¶3. The Embassy's 15-meter-square booth at the 2006 International Book Fair in Kuwait, set up next to the display arranged by the Republic of China, was twice as large as the previous year's space. Post's representation featured two attention-grabbing six-foot tall banners underscoring the "Study in the U.S." and "See You in the U.S." themes as well as a "Discover America" backdrop. The American Embassy's display, installed by Public Affairs staff on November 21, included attractive samples of IIP's "Outlining America" series, InfoUSA CD-ROMs, the last remaining copies of "Hi" magazine, and colorful reproductions of the popular e-Journals "See You in the U.S.A." and "College and University Education in the United States."

Arabic translations of American titles from Regional Book Offices (RBOs) in Amman and Cairo served as an attractive and effective stage set for Embassy staff distributing locally produced bookmarks touting web sites for Al Hurra, Radio Sawa, and USInfo. Others handed visitors Study in the U.S. brochures and Web resources cards. Meanwhile, Embassy and AMIDEAST PowerPoint presentations ran in the foreground explaining the visa process, displaying attractive scenes of America, highlighting current Embassy programs, and encouraging study at American colleges and universities.

An Auspicious Beginning

¶4. The Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts,

and Letters, Mr. Beder Al-Rehay, accompanied by the Ambassador, inaugurated Kuwait's 31st International Book Fair with a press conference followed by a special visit to the U.S. Embassy booth. This was a major change from the prior year, when the Minister of Commerce and Industry cut the ribbon with little fanfare--suggesting a diminished profile for the fair. In 2006, however, the press conference and VIP lounge on the opening day of the fair, accompanied by a speech and visit to some of the high profile booths by the Secretary General implied a larger importance and public profile for the Book Fair.

English and Arabic Best Sellers

15. The Embassy booth sold 582 books - 515 Arabic translations of American titles and 67 books in English and English teaching materials. The three most popular American titles in Arabic were:

- 1- "The American Revolution"
- 2- "Ella Enchanted"
- 3- "Politics and Religion in the United States"

The "Outline" series remained a fast-moving product in both Arabic and English.

Engaging and Influencing Target Audiences

15. Of the 50-65,000 visitors to the Book Fair, hundreds were students on field trips bused to the fair by Government schools each morning. Normally inaccessible to Embassy programs, public school students perused titles, collected bookmarks and brochures, sought educational counseling and stood glued to the PowerPoint presentations. One 13-year-old girl whose father studied in America spoke at length with an FSN and stated that her dream was to obtain her doctorate from a university in the U.S. This annual fair

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provides Public Affairs with entree to thousands of potential students and travelers to American destinations. The event is an excellent opportunity to influence and engage multiple target audiences in Kuwaiti society, especially in academia and the media.

Each One Teach One

16. The early morning school visits organized by the Government of Kuwait provided an opportunity to reach both students and teachers. The teachers requested a variety of English language teaching resources and sought additional English language teaching materials for younger students. For the teachers unable to attend in the morning with their students, the evenings and weekends provided further opportunities to gather materials for their classrooms. The most popular books for English teachers were "Talking English," "Something to Crow About," and "Changing Perspectives."

Target of Opportunity

17. Six hundred back-issues of "Hi" magazine obtained from the regional distributor were freely offered to customers, including conservatively dressed women with covered faces, who appeared quite curious about the information available in the magazine. The book fair also provided an opportunity to encourage study, travel, and business opportunities in the U.S. The Public Affairs Section staffed the booth, answering frequently asked questions regarding short- and long-term educational and business opportunities as well as tourism in the U.S. Visitors would have been well rewarded for their efforts had there been a presence from Consular Affairs, the Foreign Commercial Service and AMIDEAST. Unfortunately, budgetary pressures did not permit the additional staff during the book fair.

Looking Toward the Future

18. The international book fair provides insight into expanding the

services and materials of Public Affairs. The English and Arabic versions of U.S. maps, InfoUSA CD-ROM disks, Mosques in America posters, and the IIP "Outlining America" series appealed most to Kuwaiti customers, whereas, they found the three-year-old copies of the brochure "Muslim Life in America" outdated and disappointing. The questions most frequently asked of the Public Affairs staff were "How do I study in the U.S.?", "Where are the best tourist destinations?", and "How do I get a U.S. visa?" In preparing for the book fair next year, Post intends to expand this outreach opportunity, offer a wider variety of products, and invite greater participation by Mission and AMIDEAST colleagues.

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